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ABSTRACT

This paper explores inquiry cycles as an innovative curricular framework in whole language foreign language classes. Whole language is an educational philosophy that advocates and espouses student-centered, activity-based learning. The inquiry cycle is a holistic method of teaching based on a question or set of questions that students themselves choose to explore. This curricular model, initially developed for elementary monolingual classrooms, includes the following stages: building from the known, taking time to find questions for inquiry, gaining new perspectives, attending to difference, sharing what was learned, planning new inquiries, and taking thoughtful action. A number of different approaches for implementing inquiry cycles are explained, ranging from a full implementation to a partial implementation with curricular engagements only. The paper addresses a number of possible drawbacks to the technique and present adaptations for using inquiry cycles in foreign language settings, particularly the beginning levels of instruction. Practical implications are outlined for foreign language teachers interested in incorporating this approach into their practice. (Contains 40 references.) (Author/SM)

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Inquiry Cycles in a Whole Language Foreign Language Class: Some Theoretical and Practical Insights

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The purpose of this article is to explore inquiry cycles as an innovative curricular framework in whole language foreign language classes. Whole language is an educational philosophy that advocates and espouses student-centered, activity-based learning. The inquiry cycle is a holistic method of teaching that is based on a question or a set of questions that students themselves choose to explore. This curricular model, initially developed for elementary monolingual classrooms, includes the following stages: building from the known, taking time to find questions for inquiry, gaining new perspectives, attending to difference, sharing what was learned, planning new inquiries, and taking thoughtful action. A number of different approaches for implementing inquiry cycles are explained, ranging from a full implementation to a partial implementation with curricular engagements only. Furthermore, the authors address a number of possible drawbacks to the technique and present adaptations for using inquiry cycles in foreign language settings, particularly the beginning levels of instruction. Practical implications are outlined for foreign language teachers interested in incorporating this approach to their practice.

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching and learning are complex processes that researchers and teaching professionals have attempted to describe and explain over the years by recourse to a number of philosophical stances such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and social-constructivism. A relatively recent view of language learning that focuses on student-centered, activity-based learning is known as whole language, a philosophy that emphasizes presenting learners with the whole language rather than its isolated parts. Whole language, like other educational philosophies, is manifested in foreign language classes through a variety of approaches, techniques, and methods. The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to outline and discuss language learning and teaching based on a whole language philosophy, and second, to illustrate how inquiry cycles (a holistic teaching approach) can be applied in beginning-level foreign language classes. The authors will provide ideas and examples for different ways of incorporating inquiry cycles into the classroom and explain certain adaptations necessary for the approach to be successful.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WHOLE LANGUAGE

Many of the underlying principles of holistic philosophies are not new to the field of education. Even at the turn of the century, progressive educators such

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as John Dewey advocated student-centered, activity-based learning (Dewey, 1929). Moreover, the French psychologist Jean Piaget (1952) contributed theories of developmental learning that resulted in a new understanding of learning processes. Following along the same philosophical pathways, and garnering research support from the 1970s and 1980s, a gradual paradigm shift away from eclectic language arts programs toward a holistic stance occurred. According to Heald-Taylor (1989), five areas of research supported this shift:

1. Learning development: when preschool children experience a language rich environment, they learn language developmentally, rather than through formal instruction (Goodman, 1986).

2. Oral language development: preschool children learn to speak by speaking with significant others around them and they develop their own rule systems as their oral language emerges (Lindfords, 1991).

3. Reading development: the work of Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1987) on miscue analysis and the work of Frank Smith (1971), among others, demonstrate that one learns to read texts by reading texts rather than by reading isolated words.

4. Writing development: the work of Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) demonstrates that children invent their own writing system and constantly try to approximate the conventional system of writing.

5. Alternative evaluation: Heald-Taylor (1989) supports a shift away from standardized tests of skills toward qualitative evaluation. Formal tests have a questionable aura of objectivity, and there may be better forms of evaluation such as miscue analysis, portfolios of works, presentations, etc.

Whole language is an educational philosophy. One working definition of whole language comes from Lems (1995), who listed nine key principles associated with a whole language approach. According to her, in a whole language class:

1. The language arts are integrated.
2. Language is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.
3. Students are immersed in literacy events.
4. Students are surrounded by authentic print.
5. Students learn by doing.
6. Teachers respect and value each student's unique background, experience and learning style.
7. Learning is a collaborative activity.
8. Students take responsibility for their own learning while teachers facilitate the learning process.
9. Assessment is authentic and appropriate.

A whole language philosophy can, therefore, be implemented in diverse situations (e.g., with children or adults, among learners from different cultures,

and for different languages) without changing the basic philosophical principles that outline the learning processes. According to Goodman et al. (1987), the process of language learning and teaching is very similar across ages and educational contexts. The same basic philosophical ideas associated with whole language, then, can be adapted for use across many different contexts and settings in education.

A number of foreign language teachers and researchers have already integrated whole language concepts into their practice. Barry & Pellissier (1995) utilized a holistic language approach in order to teach popular music in their foreign language class. They concluded that the use of songs enabled the students to encounter language in an authentic context that provided opportunities to understand themes from the target culture that were functional, interesting, and relevant.

Redmond (1994) and Adair-Hauck (1996) likewise incorporated whole language approaches into their foreign language classrooms. Redmond (1994) developed and implemented an instructional unit that applied various whole language strategies to teach basic reading and writing skills in French. She maintains that tasks given to students should be relevant to their world, language activities should build on students' prior knowledge and experience, the four major skills should be integrated, and teachers should avoid using decontextualized instructional materials. Adair-Hauck (1996) described different teachers and how they used a whole language approach in their foreign language classes. Her findings showed that for many foreign language teachers the first step in the creation of a whole language lesson is the selection of an interesting story. Once the story is selected, the whole language unit is organized into three phases: pre-storytelling, storytelling, and post-storytelling. In an earlier study, Adair-Hauck (1993) had found that 90% of the students learning French through a whole language approach said the language was easier to learn by listening to stories.

de Godev (1994) researched the use of dialogue journals in her foreign language class. de Godev introduced dialogue journals into her speaking class to examine the similarities between speaking and writing processes. She concluded that a whole language approach that integrated skills and included a dialogue journal activity helped students to make connections between oral and written language skills.

Louton and Louton (1992) created a whole language foreign language elementary class in which whole contexts, real purposes, and the belief that language was incidental to the purpose were implemented. They assert that in the elementary school setting both the regular classroom teacher as well as the foreign language specialist should work on the same topics in order to create a "real" purpose for their foreign language instruction. Louton and Louton developed units that take into account the natural context of language

acquisition in addition to the differences between first language and foreign language acquisition.

WHOLE LANGUAGE: A WORKING DEFINITION

In this paper, we are using Schwarzer's (2001) definition of a successful whole language foreign language class. His work, which stems from and expands upon the work of Lems (1995), is centered on the following eight theoretical principles:

1. Language is learned best when students use authentic materials, for authentic purposes, and with authentic audiences. As Goodman (1991) stated, "Experiences in school must have all the characteristics of authentic experiences outside the school and additional characteristics that are authentic within the social-educational context of the school" (p. 281).

Dissociation between real life settings and school settings is artificial and in most cases does not help students in their learning experiences. In authentic language learning situations, participants predict meaning based on their own comprehension of the situational context (Krashen, 1985). This knowledge can be used as a resource in foreign language instruction.

The way in which students learn a second language may be enhanced by using real life literature such as children's books, short novels, autobiographies, and other reading materials not developed for the language class. These types of literature allow students to rely on their own purposes and goals while learning a second language and taking into consideration the different audiences for student writing.

2. Language is learned best when the whole is taught first and the parts are understood later. As teachers we were taught that complex experiences are difficult to understand, especially by younger students. Therefore, we should divide the complexity of an object of study into simpler parts, presumably making it easier to understand than the whole. According to Barnett (1989), bottom-up models of reading comprehension are essentially "text-driven," where the reader begins by trying to decode letters, words, and sentences, in order to build up comprehension in some type of linear fashion. After the students understand the parts, they should reconstruct the object of study as a whole again.

On the other hand, some researchers have shown that the parts of an object of knowledge and the whole object of knowledge have different characteristics (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). Goodman (1993) further illustrated that reading words in isolation and reading words in texts are two different things, and that many first grade students were able to read words in the stories which they were not able to recognize on a list. Knowing the parts may not necessarily help students to understand the whole completely.

Therefore, in a whole language foreign language class the teacher and students explore holistically the complexity of the whole from the first day of

class. Additionally, teachers in whole language classes encourage students to make their own divisions of the whole according to their own developmental understanding.

3. Language is learned best when it is developmentally constructed. Language, as other learning processes, is a developmental process. Learners attempt their own interpretations and hypotheses while they appropriate the new concepts they are trying to learn. These initial attempts and hypotheses are sometimes wrong, resulting in students making mistakes, errors, and miscues. Therefore, errors are an important and valuable part of the learning process (Piaget, 1971), and they should be valued in an environment that encourages risk-taking. As teachers our goal is not to erase the errors, miscues, and mistakes made by our students, but rather to create environments in which the student can develop new miscues, mistakes, and errors that are more advanced and more accurate than the previous ones. When teachers value misconceptions as a source of change, students grow cognitively in an environment that allows them to view both failure and success as learning experiences. Students who learn from their errors will become more comfortable risk-takers than students who are encouraged only to succeed.

4. Language is learned best when it is assessed using alternative methods of assessment. If the language teacher believes that learning language is a process, then the teacher may find one test given at the end of the term to all the students in the class as an inappropriate way to assess their language learning. Instead of simply giving a summative test the language teacher may become a researcher in the language class who attempts to discover how individual learners develop language. Many times teacher/researchers become "kid-watchers" (Wilde, 1996) who record and reflect on oral anecdotes, written drafts, and annotations made about a particular student's development throughout the year. This idea of kid-watching, widely used in primary education, may be incorporated into high school and adult education. The teacher/researcher constantly looks for alternative ways to gather information about students' growth. Many teacher/researchers develop portfolios as a form of alternative assessment in order to showcase students' growth on both process and product.

5. Language is learned best when it is socially constructed. Learning processes should be socially constructed (Goodman, 1992). When a class becomes a community of learners, learning takes place in different social interactions, modes, times, shapes, and formats that maximize the different resources that schools have (e.g., other students in the class and in other classes, other teachers in the school, other people in the school, librarians, secretaries, cooks, etc.). Parents, students' siblings, and knowledgeable members of the community can likewise contribute to significant learning experiences outside of the school setting. Moll's (1992) notion of funds of knowledge is essential in the creation of a language community. Every family has language knowledge that sometimes may not be valued by the school system. However, if we involve students'

families and communities we create environments in which language can flourish. In such an environment, teachers research their own questions in the target language, read their own books and share their own writings, all of which serve to model language learning and inspire students.

6. Language is learned best when different cultures and dialects are explored throughout the curriculum. Learning a new language brings with it a revelation of other cultures. This learning process should be an opportunity for students to reflect on their own cultures and to understand new ones related to the language that they are learning. Students' research and reflection on a foreign language may create opportunities to research and reflect upon their own native languages. This research should enable learners to empower themselves as individuals in a multicultural society (Ruiz, 1991). For example, in the language class students may need to contrast their own assumptions about family, time, politeness, and other culturally constructed notions with the same issues in the target language and culture. This is an opportunity for students to become more critical about their own cultural choices and attitudes toward themselves and toward other minorities in their environments.

7. Language is learned best when it is based on a critical pedagogy. Teaching practices are political (Banks, 1992; Freire & Macedo, 1987). As teachers we make choices for our students in our language classes: what type of language dialects are we going to include in the language class? Are we going to allow the use of the native language? How do we react to errors? How is knowledge constructed in the class? Whatever the answers to these questions are, they imply a political perspective. For example, if when we teach Spanish we prefer the Spanish from Spain over any other dialectical variation, we are making a political statement. On the other hand, if we introduce different dialectical variations to our language class, we make a different type of political statement.

Teaching language and culture also fosters an understanding of bigger socio-political issues such as racism, minority education, gender relations, etc. Teaching Spanish in the southwestern United States is not the same as teaching French in the same region.

8. Language is learned best when students and teachers negotiate the curriculum of the class and when the curriculum is based on students' own inquiries. Learning is the result of negotiations between the parties involved (Short et al., 1991). In real life, this kind of behavior is natural. In a negotiation each party explains his/her perspective and, following the negotiation period, a decision is made. There are certain constraints, however, that the participants involved in the negotiation establish as boundaries of their negotiation. For example, children know very well the boundaries of everyone in the family. They know when to go to their father to ask for something and when to go to their mother. They also know that on certain issues their parents are going to decide what is right for them. Turning again to the education setting, in the same sense, the teacher should be included in the negotiation process. If students

choose developmentally inappropriate materials for their inquiry project, the teacher should be there to guide the students toward more appropriate materials or to help them access information from a resource that is beyond their actual development. In an inquiry-based curriculum, students are encouraged to research their own questions, and they need to have the time to wander and wonder about a theme in order to formulate their own questions instead of starting from questions already formulated by the teacher.

Within this interpretation of a whole language foreign language class (WLFLC), "inquiry cycles" (Short et al., 1996) become a feasible pedagogical option for the foreign language classroom.

Inquiry Cycles: A Working Definition

The inquiry cycle is a student-centered approach to teaching and learning that begins with students self-selecting or generating a question or set of questions about a topic that interests them. One of the crucial components of the cycle is that students themselves, rather than the teacher, choose the topics that they will research and explore. The student selection of the topic creates a learning environment where the responsibility of learning is placed primarily on the student. The role of the teacher, then, becomes that of a guide, or in many instances a fellow explorer and student. While the inquiry cycle is not linear in nature, the following componential stages often recur in a cyclical pattern:

1. Building from the known: browsing, talking and listening.
2. Taking time to find questions for inquiry: wondering and wandering, experience centers, observing and exploring.
3. Gaining new perspectives: inquiry groups, in-depth researching, tools for inquiry, studio time.
4. Attending to difference: revision on inquiry, learning logs.
5. Sharing what was learned: inquiry presentations.
6. Planning new inquiries: group reflection, reflection portfolios, strategy lessons.
7. Taking thoughtful action: invitation for action.

Inquiry Cycles in Foreign Language Education (FLE)

The inquiry cycles curricular model was developed for and has been principally utilized in monolingual elementary settings. The work of Short et al. (1996) on inquiry as curriculum predominantly focuses on the development and implementation of the inquiry cycle in elementary and middle school classes. While the rhetoric of their work seems to indicate that the inquiry cycle is applicable, appropriate, and feasible at many levels of education, Short et al. do not directly address how the cycle would be played out in advanced learning settings such as junior high school, high school, and college. Also missing from the discussion is whether an inquiry cycles approach to learning could be

beneficially implemented in ESL (English as a second language) or foreign language classes, particularly at beginning-levels.

Perhaps extended dialogue and actual incorporation of the inquiry cycle into these other education settings has been dissuaded due to the apparent problems that would arise from using the approach. With regard to beginning-level foreign language classes, a number of issues and concerns that merit discussion become immediately evident.

It is presumed that the primary goal of most or all beginning-level foreign language classes is to create an environment wherein students can develop their proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, listening comprehension, and cultural awareness in the target language. Two key ingredients in the linguistic and cultural development of students in an L2 are extensive exposure to the target language and numerous opportunities to communicate and interact in the L2. The role of the target language is evident while that of the native language is much less clear. Use of the native language in foreign language classrooms is a highly debated topic. However, most researchers and scholars would agree that L1 usage in the classroom should be strategically limited, infrequent, or even nonexistent.

Here, then, is the first major obstacle against using inquiry cycles in beginning-level foreign language classes. The use of inquiry cycles necessitates large amounts of interaction, collaboration, and communication among the participants. In all likelihood, beginning foreign language learners will not possess the linguistic repertoire in the target language that would enable them to function efficiently at the levels required by the inquiry cycle. How can students be expected to select a topic of inquiry in the target language if they do not even know the basic vocabulary of that language? How are students going to read and research their topic in the target language if they are essentially illiterate in the L2? Is verbal communication and interaction among students engaged in the discussion of a topic realistic? Will large amounts of time and instruction be necessary just to keep the inquiry cycle boat afloat?

Obviously, the students could operate in this type of language learning environment if they were allowed to use their native language, but would the L1 inhibit or reduce the acquisition of the L2? Will students be allowed to strategically use their L1? Does the low linguistic level of the students necessitate the abandonment or non-adoption of an inquiry cycles approach? The lack of target language linguistic ability is one of the greatest deterrents to implementing the inquiry cycle in beginning-level foreign language classes. There are also other obstacles to be discussed and overcome.

Beginning in middle school and continuing through junior high, high school, and college is the notion that knowledge should be compartmentalized. Different curricular areas are taught by different teachers who have acquired specialized knowledge and skills in a particular area. It is the compartmentalization of knowledge that drives instructors to specialization and

development of advanced knowledge and skills in an area of expertise. Since teachers have focused their study and knowledge base, it is believed that they are thus better able to provide in-depth quality instruction. Taking a markedly different stance, Short and Burke (1996) do not see the compartmentalization of knowledge in such a positive light. They see the compartmentalization of knowledge as a failed attempt to shift from traditional classrooms to an integrated curriculum. Essentially what happened was the following:

> classes stayed within what [teachers] already knew, and students were supposed to 'discover' what experts already knew about the topic....Although [the] goal was integrated curriculum, when [teachers] looked closely [they] saw that [the] units compartmentalized knowledge (p. 99).

Strict adherence to the segregation of knowledge bases poses a serious threat to an inquiry cycles approach.

Is the educational system flexible enough, though, to allow teachers to stray too far from their subject area in allowing students to explore and inquire? What about state and national standards for curricula? Teachers are expected to provide instruction so that students meet established requirements and gain specified knowledge. What happens if students are involved in inquiry cycles that do not deal with the issues or knowledge bases of their particular subject areas? Can students' learning be left to chance? Will the inquiry cycle provide all the instruction necessary for teachers to meet the state and national mandates for their subject area? Will the inquiry cycle function in one-hour blocks like regular classes? All of these questions must be appropriately answered before inquiry cycles can ever be systemically implemented.

In beginning-level foreign language classes, how are these questions played out? Can they be adequately answered and can the inquiry cycle be implemented successfully? Obstacles and limitations regarding the implementation of the inquiry cycle in beginning-level foreign language classes do exist, but they are not insurmountable.

Despite the apparent problems, foreign language education is well-suited for an inquiry cycles approach. First of all, curricular standards and guidelines for foreign languages such as Spanish, German, and French are usually quite broad and non-specific in nature, allowing teachers a measure of leeway in developing courses and determining which methods of instruction to employ. A common guideline would suggest that students' learning outcomes would involve improvement in the four basic skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening) and that they would learn about the target language culture. Second, the content of most beginning-level foreign language classes is basic enough that a number of approaches, including the inquiry cycle, will likely produce the desired results. Present tense verbs, adjective agreement, and articles, for

example, are items that can be learned through the inquiry cycle just as well as through a text-based approach or grammar translation method. Third, because many students perceive language learning as distinct from other types of learning, they may be more open to novel ideas and new approaches. The foreign language classroom, then, is a suitable site for the inquiry cycle.

The inquiry cycle offers students in beginning-level language classes a number of benefits. The approach enables students to explore the target language and culture through any content that they choose. Students' learning becomes authentic, personal, and meaningful. The target language becomes more than the topic of inquiry; it becomes the vehicle for inquiry. The inquiry cycle serves to simultaneously improve language and inquiry skills. Functioning within the confines of the cycle enables students to gain new skills and abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, thus fulfilling curricular standards for beginning-level language learners. Finally, research focused on sociocultural aspects of second language acquisition emphasizes the importance of the collaborative interaction that constitutes a major portion of the inquiry cycle. Pair work allows students to mutually scaffold one another while engaged in problem solving (De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000) and the interaction provided by the inquiry cycle enables students to act as experts and novices in their zones of proximal development. Brooks et al. (1997) suggest that just as students need an environment that is input-rich, they also need an environment that is collaboration-rich. This is precisely the type of environment fostered by the inquiry cycle.

Different Approaches for Implementation

A number of options exist for teachers interested in implementing inquiry cycles into their beginning-level foreign language classes. The first option, and perhaps the most difficult, would be to implement the inquiry cycle fully where it would be the theoretical and pedagogical basis of the way the entire class was handled. Another option would be partial implementation, such as initiating mini-inquiry cycles at various times during the course of the semester or dedicating a portion of each class period to an inquiry approach to learning. The third option would be the implementation of specific curricular engagements that focus on student-centered learning and inquiry processes.

For the inquiry cycle to function properly with beginning learners possessing limited linguistic abilities in the target language, a number of adaptations such as checklists, prompts, cue cards, vocabulary lists, and models are needed. Teachers might also think seriously about allowing the students to strategically use their native language until additional, more advanced linguistic abilities are developed. The strategic allowance of the native language will enable students to more successfully and efficiently work through the cycle as individuals and as groups. Many researchers and practitioners are hesitant or even adamantly opposed to the use of the native language in the foreign

language class. The use of the native language is in some way seen to inhibit the acquisition of the target language. This stance maintains that students learn the target language "better" when completely immersed and surrounded by it. Research dealing with sociocultural approaches to second language acquisition provides a somewhat different view, illustrating a number of vital roles for L1 in L2 learning situations. The strategic L1 roles highlighted in the research include L1 as a collaborative tool, L1 as a scaffolding tool, L1 as a vehicle for establishing intersubjectivity, and L1 as a psychological tool for regulation and task orientation (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; de Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000).

Fully implementing an inquiry cycles approach in beginning-level foreign language classes is not be an easy task. The initial days, weeks, and perhaps months may be difficult and frustrating for the teacher and students. It is likely that teachers will feel that students are not making the gains they would in a more "traditional" language class. Students may feel frustrated by the fact that they do not possess the high level linguistic abilities necessary to carry out the inquiry cycle entirely in the target language. At beginning-levels, it is unlikely that the inquiry cycle will function efficiently, but both teacher and students must realize that that is to be expected. An inquiry cycles approach is as much about learning as it is about learning the target language. Students will be engaged in the process of learning the target language through personal inquiry and investigation. A similar model of learning is behind ESL courses designed to provide English through content courses rather than specific ESL classes. In both instances, the goal is to learn a language by using the language for some specific purpose rather than studying it as a disconnected and unrelated entity. The inquiry cycle allows students to learn the target language while they engage in personally fulfilling inquiry.

For teachers who would like to experiment with the inquiry cycles without completely committing themselves, a number of possibilities for partial implementation are available. One possibility would be to introduce the inquiry cycle only after students have been in class for a number of weeks and been taught pertinent vocabulary and skills. A second possibility would be to introduce mini-inquiry cycles a few times during the semester. A third possibility would be to take a portion of class time each day to focus on activities associated with the inquiry cycle and leave the remainder of the time for the regular classroom routines and instruction. Of the three possibilities provided, the third is probably the most feasible and the most desirable. Students who are exposed to the inquiry cycle from the outset of the semester (even if it is for just 10-15 minutes each day) will be more familiar with and operate better in the cycle than those who receive only intermittent exposure a few times during the semester or year.

Another avenue available to teachers is the use of curricular engagements associated with inquiry processes. In their book, Short et al. (1996) provide an

extensive list of curricular engagements for the inquiry cycle that can be adapted for use in beginning-level foreign language classrooms. A number of the engagements from a beginning-level Hebrew class are explained below, but for a more comprehensive list, including materials, procedures, and variations, the reader is referred to the original source (Short et al., 1996).

As part of one Hebrew 101 class, students were engaged in a variety of curricular projects. Some students researched the biblical text in its original language. Others wrote letters to family and friends in Israel. Still others wrote travel guides to Israel. Tony and Linda completed a particularly interesting project: a comic book in Hebrew, with a main character named "Super Jew" who looked very much like "Superman." Like "Superman," "Super Jew" tried to save humanity from evil, but unlike "Superman" (who got changed into his costume in a telephone booth), "Super Jew" changed clothes behind a burning bush! The book was extremely entertaining, and all of the students thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

The development of Rachel and Michelle's Travel Guide to Israel, a pamphlet they created, illustrates the power of the inquiry cycle in action. During the first steps of the inquiry cycles, the students in the Hebrew 101 class were immersed in a large amount of authentic written materials ranging from Hebrew children's books to Hebrew basal readers, from restaurant menus in Hebrew to Hebrew magazines and newspapers. The teacher read some of these materials in front of the class. Additionally, some students brought materials they found at the local Jewish community library, at the Hillel foundation, and other mementos they brought back with them from Israel. One of the authentic materials in the class was a bilingual Hebrew-English travel guide used in Israel by the Ministry of Tourism. Michelle and Rachel started to ask questions about the travel guide: What does an Israeli travel guide look like? Do the guides have only one format or several formats? Are all travel guides bilingual English/Hebrew? After looking very closely at their only travel guide, they decided to send a letter to the local Israeli consulate. They wrote a letter using both Hebrew and English asking for travel guides to the different cities in Israel. After two weeks, they received a few travel guides to different cities in the country and some travel guides designed for tourists interested in touring the whole country.

The next step was to decide what their travel guide of Israel would look like. They decided to create a monolingual Hebrew tourist guide to Israel based on the format provided by one of the travel guides received from the consulate. The basic format was a weekly vacation plan designed for a seven day vacation on a daily basis: Day 1-2: Jerusalem and its surroundings, Day 3: the Dead Sea. They decided to use their own photographs from their trip to Israel in order to illustrate the travel guide.

At this point in the inquiry cycle of the entire class, Rachel and Michelle presented their preliminary idea to other members of the class in a group

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discussion. At the same time, the other students in the group presented information on the inquiries they had been pursuing. Before this discussion took place, the teacher provided students with cue cards including several basic sentences and words used in discussions in Hebrew such as: 'I liked it because...,' 'I did not like it because...,' 'I think that the best point in your inquiry is...,' 'I think that you should change...,' 'Did you consider...?'

After the discussion took place, Michelle and Rachel had time to reflect on which changes they were willing to implement based on the feedback that they received from their fellow students. They wrote a second draft of their work based on the feedback. It is important to note that not all the recommendations made by the other members of the group were included in the final draft. After writing the final draft with the help of various resources (the Hebrew travel guides received from the consulate, a Hebrew-English dictionary, the other students in the group, and the teacher), Rachel and Michelle wrote their final draft of their travel guide.

The final product was a poster-like travel guide that was presented to the whole class. During the presentation, students asked questions about the decisions that Michelle and Rachel had made throughout the entire inquiry cycle process. Why is the travel guide monolingual? Why is it so big? How do you know how many days you should stay at each location? Clearly, Rachel and Michelle were able to use different semiotic systems to communicate their findings (pictures, drawings, maps, etc.). This is one of the strengths of the inquiry cycle in a foreign language.

Rachel and Michelle also discussed with the teacher some of the new questions that had arisen from their initial inquiry about travel guides in Israel: Why do all the travel guides seem to be bilingual? Why is there no standard transliteration of Hebrew cities (Kfar Saba - Qfar Sabah)? What is the most common length of travel for most tourists going to Israel?

Finally, Michelle and Rachel decided to make a copy of their travel guide available to future Hebrew classes so others would be able to plan their Israeli experiences in advance. Throughout this experience, both Michelle and Rachel seemed to be very motivated since they were sharing with the class something that was personal and important to them, and they used Hebrew as a means toward an end (Schwarzer, 2001).

As part of the negotiation of the curriculum, students should be encouraged to think about ideas and projects to be developed during a period of two or more weeks (Short et al., 1991). Some students may develop projects that continue over time. One particular requirement for every curricular engagement is to find a way to show and share the results with the class. Many different forms could be used including presentations, listening to audiotapes, posters, or lessons to the whole class. Students should be encouraged to present not only their final project but also their early drafts to the language teacher. By doing so, teachers may gain more opportunities to engage in meaningful language

interactions and guidance. Having students turn in a draft of the presentation one week in advance may offer the teacher the opportunity to mediate (Vygotsky, 1978) students' work. Very short inquiry cycles and very long inquiry cycles are problematic, and thus it is recommended to encourage students to develop inquiry cycles or curricular engagements that are two or three weeks long.

Inquiry ,cycles can become an important activity in a foreign language class. Students develop language as a means toward an end and not as an end in itself (Schwarzer, 1996). It is important to share the projects in the WLFLC in order to develop a community of learners.

Ways for teachers to implement the inquiry cycle in beginning-level foreign language classes do exist. Some ideas have been mentioned here, and many others are possible. Implementing the inquiry cycle in beginning-level foreign language classrooms will not be an easy task for the students due to the low levels of linguistic ability in the target language and their unfamiliarity with the approach itself. Teachers and students are encouraged not to give up on the cycle, but continue to work with the framework. Students will gain target language skills, but more importantly they will gain inquiry skills that will allow them to take control of themselves and their learning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FLE TEACHER

The above discussion highlighted various obstacles to overcome when incorporating the inquiry cycle into a beginning-level foreign language classroom. The mere existence of obstacles, however, does not necessarily mean that the inquiry cycle should not or cannot be used. It simply means that the inquiry cycle must be adapted and used judiciously. Individual classroom teachers will have to make decisions about their students, their classes, and their uses of the inquiry cycles.

An important point to reiterate is that studies in second language acquisition have repeatedly shown that for language acquisition to occur, students need large amounts of comprehensible input and also opportunities to communicate in the target language. The use of the inquiry cycle must provide students with those types of activities and opportunities. The goals and objectives of the class cannot be sacrificed simply to employ the cycle. If the inquiry cycle seems to require too much native language use, then perhaps the teacher should look for other ways to implement the cycle or refrain from using it in the class. With watchful care, though, the authors believe that the inquiry cycle can be used without any detrimental effects to students' L2 development, even in beginning-level classes. The inquiry cycle is not a panacea or "the" method for language instruction. It is but another option for educators concerned about maximizing their students' learning experiences.

In addition to implementing the inquiry cycle in beginning-level classes, teachers of foreign languages at more advanced levels should research and

consider the possibility of a curricular and pedagogical shift in their classes in order to use the cycle. The inquiry cycle would be excellent for language learners at more advanced levels because it has all the components necessary for intermediate and advanced language learners to be inquirers and at the same time to expand their second language skills and knowledge. For learners at more advanced levels, the linguistic demands of the inquiry cycle are less problematic.

Little research has been done to implement and document the inquiry cycle in any foreign language classes or in middle and upper levels of education. This paper suggests that the inquiry cycle can be employed and that it will yield positive results. Obviously, further research and the actual implementation of the inquiry cycle in beginning-level and other foreign language classes are necessary to support and substantiate the claims made herein.

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